Evan Yunker

Chapter 5 summary

Chapter 5 begins by stating that the chapter will cover the “international and national forces that shaped Ecuador’s environmentalism during the height of neoliberalism” (Lewis, 2016). In 1992 the “earth summit” conference took place in Rio de Janeiro where members of the united nations all agreed to sign documents that promised to move forward with sustainable development. For it’s time this was a very new and unheard-of occurrence. Other countries including Ecuador were feeling pressure to join in with the movement because of its magnitude and importance. Ecuador wrote up documents to set guidelines and goals to be set for sustainable government. This chapter states that Ecuador’s environmental plan “looked good on paper” but were not actually doing much in real life. Ecuador appeared to be “green” and making efforts to protect land and its people in a sustainable way. In reality, had it not been for outside international pressure, Ecuador would not have changed anything. Essentially, Ecuador’s government was too weak to take on the responsibility it had assumed through the UNCED agreement.

What drove funding through this Neoliberal Boom was funding coming in from outside countries. USAID is one group responsible for many of Ecuador’s environmental accomplishments. From 1991 to 1997 USAID ran the SUBIR program to manage Ecuador In a sustainable matter. The plan was quite ambitious and, in the end, turned out to be a flop. The people of Ecuador seemed to be worse off in the end than they had started. Because of Ecuador’s weak state, it was outside countries and organizations like USAID that would lead in Ecuador’s environmental movement at this time. It was also these transnational funders and ecoimperialists that were the ones primarily funding projects for a “green” movement. Because it was these outside funders providing money to these projects, it was they who set the agenda, not the people of Ecuador. This is a problem in my mind because the wellbeing of the people who actually live in Ecuador is not in the best interest of these funders. The agendas were set to solve global problems, not the issues that citizens in Ecuador faced every day. Such as clean water, air and living conditions. Not only was this an issue for the social aspect, but it was an issue because those who resisted the idea of extracting petroleum and selling to the U.S. did not have much of a voice or say in the matter. The train of thought at the time was conservation without the presence of people in mind. To me this is a very bad idea. The reason we need conservation efforts is because of our human presence on the planet. So, to practice conservation without factoring in the presence of humans seems ridiculous. Luckily, after the Earth Summit conference this view changed, and people started to be factored into the equation of conservation.

The ecodependant groups of Ecuador had to me seem to be one and the same as ecoimperiealists leading the charge and setting the agenda for the environmental movement. Because the ecoimperialists were the ones with the money, they created and trained ecodependent groups to become functioning members of the environmental movement in Ecuador at the time. Although both did not necessarily share the same views on conservation exactly, they were both able to work together on bettering the environment and conservation projects. Unfortunately, all that work did not take the state very far. They appeared to be moving in the direction of Schnailberg’s Managed Scarcity theory but this was not actually practiced. The government of Ecuador was not actually moving toward a more sustainable way of life. To me this throws me off a bit. I questioned that if Ecuador wanted to be such a big player in the environmental movement, why weren’t they doing what they said they would do? I understand the government was weak at the time, but the fact that things were being hidden or shady does not make sense to me. I think that the government should have realized that there was too much to take on and openly say that things would have to move in smaller steps or that they took on too much at once. It seems like a classic case of promising a certain thing (usually in politics) and not doing what was promised. I do suppose that the fact that Ecuador was at least trying to move toward a green movement and being conscious of environmentalism is a plus side to this situation. At least the topic was being talked about and some people cared.

# Works Cited

Lewis, Tammy; Ecuador’s Environmental Revolutions (2016)